



**Testimony submitted to The Government Administration and Election Committee  
In support of HB 5050: An Act Modernizing the Symbol of Access for Persons with Disabilities**

February 22, 2016

Good afternoon Senator Casano, Representative Jutila and members of the Government Administration and Election Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of House Bill 5050. I also want to acknowledge and thank Governor Malloy, Senator Beth Bye and Disability Liaison Jonathan Slifka for their strong support for this bill.

My name is Shannon Jacovino and I am the Director of Advocacy & Public Policy of The Arc Connecticut. The Arc Connecticut has been the premiere advocacy organization for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities for 63 years. Our mission has always been to protect the civil rights of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and to promote opportunities for their full inclusion in the life of their communities.

Our organization is part of The Arc of The United States. Nationwide we have 675 chapters in 49 states with close to 5,000 direct service locations. Across the country we have about 6900 board members, 124,000 staff, more than 46,000 volunteers. Collectively we serve more than 1 million people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families. Here in Connecticut, we have 18 chapters that provide community based supports. Statewide, we have more than 195 board members, 3,729 staff and more than 1,288 volunteers.

I am incredibly proud to be associated with the self-advocates from one of our local chapters, The Arc of Farmington Valley, who created lead the “change the sign” campaign and petition which lead to this bill. They are an amazing group of young people in their early twenties who are, in most ways, very much like every other group of “twenty somethings” you know. They have friends. They have jobs. They have dreams. They are excited about their futures. And like most people their age, they have the audacity to believe they can change the world. The self-advocates who started this campaign are the voice of a new generation that does not want to be held down or held back by the perceptions of others. They want to you and everyone else to know they intend to make their mark on the world.

HB 5050 will change the icon on accessibility signs to a figure leaning forward, showing movement, suggesting the independence and engagement of those with accessibility needs. This new symbol will be a better reflection of the diverse community of people who use accessible parking, most of whom do not use wheelchairs but do have accessibility needs. The bill would also replace the word “handicapped” with “reserved” because “handicapped” indicates helplessness and those with accessibility needs are

anything but helpless. Most importantly, HB 5050 will help change the attitudes of the general public toward people with accessibility needs. This is so important.

Year after year our community is forced to come up here to beg for funding to give people with intellectual and developmental disabilities the supports they need just to live their lives in the community. I have often thought that if lawmakers and our society as a whole placed a higher premium on the lives and the rights of people with disabilities we wouldn't have to fight so hard for the basics. Passing this bill would not be a panacea, but it would be one important step towards changing attitudes and misperceptions about people with disabilities. Please vote yes on HB 5050.

Thank you.